

## Oral history with 72 year old white female, Concord, Massachusetts (Transcription)

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Speaker: Also, Whenever we had guests from out of town, or out of state, or other countries, my father entertained very interesting people, one of the great things was, of course, to take them to the Minuteman at the North Bridge. We were very aware that the sculptor, Daniel Chester French's sister had married my mother's uncle, so we felt in a way related to the Minuteman. Strange to say the first time I ever heard of Thoreau, other than as a street name, was when we were entertaining an actor and actress, John Craig and Mary Young, who owned the Castle Square Theater in Boston. They came in their limousine, had Sunday dinner, and then wanted to see the site of Thoreau's cabin, so my father showed them. My sister and I stayed in the car with the chauffeur, and I remember the snow falling very gently as my father and Mr. & Mrs. Craig disappeared into the woods. The chauffeur demonstrated how the little electric lights went on and off in the limousine. Strange association with Thoreau, but that started my awareness of him. The spot where Paul Revere was captured by the British was another place where we took visitors. We hired a carriage from McManus's livery stable in those days if the visitors didn't have their own cars. When a family visited from North Carolina, there were ten of us including my family

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Speaker: and we had to hire a huge three-seated carriage and another vehicle to get to the North Bridge. My mother was on the Concord Womens Club committee to try to acquire the Alcott House. The committee wrote to Mrs. Lothrop who lived abroad and who

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then owned it, and made an offer. She wrote the Five Little Peppers under the name of Margaret Sidney. Contributions were solicited in order to buy the house, and the most outstanding contribution, in my mind, was 10 cents from a little girl in Hungary. Mrs. Lothrop wrote accepting their offer and then had second thoughts and cabled, and they waited after getting the cable and had her consent in writing and acted on that. I was rather shocked at that even in my young mind. But Mrs. Lothrop was happy about it in the end. The Alcotts were so alive to me that when I bought some ribbon at <gap> store, we had been told that she had trimmed Miss Alcott's hats, I used to wonder if Miss Alcott had had the other first end of that ribbon. The Concord Lyceum had a series of concerts and lectures at the old Town Hall, which was a continuation of what the Alcotts and Emersons took part in, and Walton Ricketson played Thoreau's own flute. I don't know what he played, but I realized it was a very important occasion. My father especially was very sensitive to the importance of occasions and places and people. During my growing up years, Concord was very open and friendly, and I think of a lot of roaming the fields of the

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Speaker: Simon Willard farm and all around Nashawtuc Hill with the reservation that we must not go into the woods alone. The Warner's lived where Park Lane is now and they owned the woods. A little railway went from the reformatory to Boston via those woods and was a possible escape route for the inmates, which they occasionally used. Even now in the last ten years, I have bicycled along that railroad after the American Telephone Co. had laid lines from the west coast to the east coast and smoothed it out quite a bit. The very next day they were hunting for men right along that track. So we roamed happily around with a certain awareness that there might be danger. I was very aware that the reformatory did exist and I was probably conditioned a bit by the fact that my father was the United States Marshall for this district. I was too young to have remembered much of it but we did have to have the house on Nashawtuc Hill guarded. Just a year ago, Everett

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Thorpe asked me if I remembered his father guarding the house as a special policeman. The meadows around our area made a great place for acting out the Knights of King Arthur, even belaying some people who were wandering by and challenging them to battle, most of them proper matrons walking up Elm Street. I attended Miss White's Home School for Girls on Belknap Street at the elbow of the street. The school had a small number of boarders and a nice group of day scholars with boys in it. <gap> tipped over his desk one day and ink went

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Speaker: on the floor, but we thought what a good thing that it was <gap> because his father had a school so that made it all right. He was the first headmaster at the Middlesex School. The <gap> were a very interesting pair of ladies and as I think now, they were very progressive. We did a great deal of acting out in whatever we were learning including Bible stories. Whenever we had pageants or performances, it was a very serious thing. One time we were getting a little too noisy in the gymnasium waiting so we all knelt down and said The Lord's Prayer, and that put the right restraint on us. We also had a great deal of poetry, Browning and Kipling. I lived near Franklin Sanborn. We could look down on the Elm Street bridge and his house, which was the last house from town before the bridge. At that time he invited certain people to dump rubbish on his place in order to extend his land. He didn't want to hitch up to the sewer; he really believed in organic gardening. My mother was apprehensive about his falling in the river. He was very old and bent and he would be very near the edge pushing this rubbish around, so she kept a rope handy. In my 8-year old diary I found an entry that said "Sunday. Mr. Sanborn came to dinner today. He was not invited but that is all right if you are a sage." Perhaps he didn't rank with the sages with a capital S but he had a great many thoughts and he had been a friend of the Emersons

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Speaker: and Alcotts, and we respected him very much. We felt sages walked with their hands behind their backs. But you could be unusual and that was all right if you were one of these people to be respected. He was very lovely with my sister and I. I have a picture of him in the armchair with us standing on each side. I saved one page from my father's every day dairy and on that one page was that Mr. Sanborn had come up on that evening. Mr. Sanborn said that my father and he were the society for the regulation of the universe. He said one of them was president and one was vice president and my mother asked what they made her. Mr. Sanborn answered "You, Mrs. Darling, are the barmaid." His range of subjects about people was all the way from Moses down to Mrs. Forbes, Ralph Waldo Emerson's sister. My father noted everyone he mentioned including John Brown. We knew the episode of antiJohn Brown people attempting to kidnap Mr. Sanborn. I think the attempted kidnapping was because he was proJohn Brown. Mr. Sanborn lived on Sudbury Road then and having long legs he raised his feet on the gatepost as they were carrying him out, and then somebody ran over to Judge Hoar's house and he wrote out a writ hastily. Some woman also unhitched the horses, so they were not successful in the kidnapping. end of excerpt M11 A(3)